



*Women, Power & Politics*, by Kira Heineck, Toronto, 2003

Many thanks to all who gave generously of their time and ideas to the contents of this book, and to those who led by example along the way: Jane Mercer, Mary Morison, Vivian McCaffrey, Stella Ng, Sue Parker, Cheryl DeGras, Carrol Anne Sceviour, Shellie Bird, Eva Heineck, Sarah Jordison, Peggy Nash, Natalie Mehra, Judy Wilkings, Laurel Smith, Cathy Crowe, Janet Teibo, Robyn Kotyk, Chris Charlton, Rosemary Profiti, Monique Griffin, Katharine Sheen and Tristan Quesnelle.

Women Power and Politics is dedicated to all women everywhere working to make a difference and daring to speak up. This includes, but is certainly not limited to, the local women celebrated by their friends and colleagues in communities across Ontario and brought to the author's attention while writing the book: Helen LaFontaine, Denise Gilbert and Fiona Nelson.

Written by Kira Heineck, 2003.

Cover art designed by Robyn Kotyk.

Woman Power and Politics is a project of the *Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care* and is sponsored by:

Status of Women Canada

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC)

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO)

Canadian Auto Workers (CAW)

Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL)

Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE)

Canadian Benefits Consulting Group (CBCG)

## Table of Contents

Why this book?	2
Why be powerful?	3
What is power?	4
What is woman power?	4
Woman power and politics	5
Herstory—power and activism	6
The Federal Government	
What and how	8
What happens inside the House of Commons?	10
How does a bill become a law?	11
The Provincial Government of Ontario	
How does it work?	12
How does a bill become a law in Ontario?	13
Downloading	15
Municipal government	
How does it work in Toronto?	15
How does it work in your community?	16
How do we maximize woman power?	17
What is ECEC?	21

The global context	22
Pay equity	23
Elections—useful tools for woman power	24
How to use elections	25
Democratic reform—how it can increase woman power	26
Advocacy 101	29
Feminist principles of organizing	32
Glossary	33
Sources	37
Websites	38

**“One of the greatest mistakes women make is to assume their good intentions and hard work will be rewarded. They won’t: you need power, to make a difference.”** Joan Kirner & Moira Rayner

## Why this book?

Welcome to *Woman Power and Politics*. This book’s aim is to explore how women can create more power in today’s political systems. The more we learn about the power women can harness in politics, the closer we come to gaining more victories – victories such as raising women’s status in society, achieving economic equality and security, and creating freedom from bodily harm by eliminating violence against women and achieving peace in the world around us.

*Women Power and Politics* is also about identifying the things we care about as women’s issues. Child care, public education, poverty, housing, domestic violence – these are all things that affect women’s lives to a greater extent than they do men’s lives. For example:

- ⊙ 3 out of every 4 women in Ontario whose youngest child is between the ages of 3 and 5 are working.
- ⊙ 1,325,400 children under 12 in Ontario have mothers in the workforce, but there are regulated child care spaces for only 9% of them. Where are the other 91% of these children of working women?
- ⊙ Far more women live in poverty than do men. Those living in deepest poverty in Ontario and Canada are single mothers. 64% of minimum wage earners are women. The median income for a disabled woman is \$8,360.00, for a disabled man it is over \$19,000.
- ⊙ Inadequate access to safe and secure housing is one major factor keeping women in poverty. The lack of affordable housing in Ontario has also been identified as a key barrier to women attempting to flee domestic violence.

These are women’s issues. Women are the ones living these lives. By and large, it will be women who will lead the way on policy and political decisions needed to make meaningful changes in these areas.

The same is true of our enduring economic inequality in Canada, where, on average, women still make only 72 cents for every dollar a man makes. **Doris Anderson**, past-president of the Canadian Advisory Council on the Status of Women and a pioneering feminist in Canada, understood this in 1979 when she said: “The fundamental fact that women at the end of the 1970s are still economically disadvantaged at every level of society means that the struggle for change must continue well into the 1980s and beyond.” Today, in 2003, though progress has been made, we face the same challenges, and must continue the struggle.

Some of the tradition of women’s power is outlined in this book. As you’ll read in the following pages, being powerful comes as naturally to women as it does to men, despite persistent notions that women are weak, passive and delicate.

The time is ripe for women to reach for more. Women have huge untapped power in Canada – we are, after all, 51% of the total population! We can become increasingly active in our community, civic and political lives. We can work together. We can be smart and think strategically about how to use the political system around us to exercise as much power over our own lives as possible. We can elect more women to political office, and we can create the social and economic situations so that more and more women want to, and are able to, run for office.

The first step is to gain the knowledge we need to understand, analyze, engage in and change the current political power system. *Woman Power and Politics* hopes to help you in this quest. These pages attempt to make clear what Canada’s formal political structures look like, including explanations of the federal, provincial and municipal levels of government, and how to use them best. All words highlighted in blue or white you’ll find in the handy Glossary at the end.

Inside you will also find tips on where women can squeeze the most out of a political moment to achieve success on the things that make a real difference in our lives as women. For the most part, we use child care as our example issue, but housing, education or poverty, or the other issues you care about, can be easily substituted. You will also find contacts for further information on a whole host of issues at the back of this book.

## WHY BE POWERFUL?

Having power means having control over the conditions and quality of our lives. Women in Canada haven’t traditionally thought of themselves as powerful—mostly because we haven’t been! Centuries of a male-dominated society has seen to that. But even “power” has, until recently, been thought of as a masculine thing—something that only men do and should concern themselves with. This is especially true in the realm of political power, with the important exception of the women who fought for our right to vote in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

It is time now that women care about political power too. Most of the decisions that affect our lives are still made by men, and this in turn very much influences the

results of those decisions. You can bet that if women were equal partners in these decisions, many would be quite different. In fact, countries that elect a higher number of women to political office consistently enact more laws and policies that benefit women and children. A recent Canadian example of female political leadership comes from the province of Quebec where women politicians, under the leadership of **Pauline Marois**, brought in universal child care for only \$5 a day.

Power is there for the taking. Unless more women exercise it, the currently male-dominated decision-making bodies in Canada will continue to make policy that just doesn't reflect the needs of women.

## WHAT IS POWER?

Power can be defined as *the ability or capacity to perform or act effectively, strength or force exerted or capable of being exerted, or a person, group, or nation having great influence or control over others*. There are also different ways of understanding and using power. For example, there is:

**Power over** - This is when one person or group has power over another person or group. Examples of what results when this type of power is used against those without power are sexism or racism. Ideologies like these repress people because of their gender or race and are often attempts by those in power to keep their power.

**Power within** - Our inner strength, our self-confidence, sense of determination or what motivates our spirit – these are all different versions of the power we all contain within. Recognizing and nurturing our inner power potential is an essential part of becoming and being powerful – for both women and men.

**Power with** – This is the power we create by working together. We increase our power as we join with others. *Power with* is also about creating real solidarity between different groups – or, to put it another way, it's about creating lasting communities that unite us as we struggle for equality for *all* people.

## What is WOMAN POWER?

Women experience life differently than men. Woman power is about recognizing this and then finding ways of making sure that women's voices are included, and have equal weight, in the decisions that affect people's lives. Woman power is about making sure women's needs are met and women's experiences are appropriately reflected in public and social policy.

When thinking about woman power there are a few things to note.

- ☉ We are powerful by sheer numbers alone. This is power we can harness by talking to each other, communicating to overcome the barriers that divide us and learning about the goals and needs that unite us.

- ⊙ We do not have to accept the current male definitions of power as the only type of power out there. A few different ways of thinking about power have already been outlined above.
- ⊙ There are other ways of being powerful, or generating woman power. Part of our struggle to achieve *more* woman power in Ontario is to work to change the current political structures, which still concentrate so much power in the hands of white, upper-class males. The pages on participatory democracy and proportional representation in this book challenge this.
- ⊙ Woman power has often expressed itself in arenas outside of state power, or politics. Women in most cultures around the world have been shut out of government power for most of history and thus much of woman power has been developed as grass-roots community power. It has been this type of woman power that has made the greatest difference in the daily lives of generations of women and their families. It has also been the starting place for many movements that grew to effect society-wide structural change. *The Mothers of Plaza de Mayo* in Argentina who braved brutal persecution to protest the “disappearance” of their daughters and sons, and in so doing galvanized popular resistance to the dictatorship in Argentina, is one courageous example.

### Woman Power and Politics

Politics can be defined as *the art or science of government or governing, especially the governing of a political entity, such as a nation, and the administration and control of its internal and external affairs.*

In Ontario and Canada today most of the decisions that affect women’s lives are still made in Toronto and Ottawa. This is true even for the decisions that are made at the international level or in the corporate world. Our national and provincial governments are still invested with great power to manage how those decisions will affect the laws of our country and province and how their citizens experience them.

Woman power in politics is when women politicians and women’s groups approach issues from a woman’s point of view and attempt to influence decision-making processes in our political structures to effect action and change so that the best possible outcome for women is achieved.

The more we increase woman power in politics, the better the lives of women will be. Currently, our concerns and demands as women are not being reflected in our governments and their decisions. For example, throughout the last decade or so of spending cuts and deficit reduction, women in Canada and Ontario continue to strongly support investment in social programs. Women are still waiting for these priorities to be met with government action.

**“If women lawyers and women judges through differing perspectives on life can bring a new humanity to bear on the decision-making process, perhaps they will make a difference.” Bertha Wilson, first women Supreme Court judge, 1988**

### DID YOU KNOW?

In 2003 the vast majority of our elected leaders are still male, despite the fact that women make up half of our population and have been able to run for office since the 1920s. A survey of over 130 municipalities across Ontario (there are 446!) revealed that only 12% of mayors in Ontario are women. Look at how the other numbers compare:

Level of Government	MEN	WOMEN	% of women
<b>Federal—MPs</b> (only 298 of 301 seats are filled as of publication date)	231	67	<b>22%</b>
<b>Provincial—MPPs</b> (only 102 of 103 seats are filled as of publication date)	85	17	<b>17%</b>
<b>Toronto City Councillors</b> (44 seats)	31	13	<b>30%</b>

## Herstory

Women's history – or *herstory* – in Canada, Ontario and in our many local communities, is full of courageous, powerful and successful women. It's remarkable to remember that 100 years ago, in 1903 women couldn't vote, marry who we wanted and had only recently been able to own property (this happened in 1884). Of course, some First Nations cultures like the Mohawk have long recognized the power of women, giving them, for example, the power to make important political decisions such as choosing the council chiefs. Along the way from there to here in Canada, we were led by great women, some famous and some less well known. What follows is a brief sketch of some moments from the last 150 years or so of woman, power and politics.

**1830s** A Halifax factory owner sets up an infant school so that mothers are free to work in his factory. The first creches in Quebec open to care for children of widowed or abandoned mothers. These are examples of broader changes, due to [Industrialization](#), which provided care for children in order to free primarily poorer, working-class mothers up to work in the new factories.

**1870-1900** In [1873](#) the first kindergarten in the public education system opens its doors in Toronto. In [1881](#) The Creche, later to become Victoria Day Care Services, opens in Toronto. In [1889](#) teacher **Hester How** allows students to bring their



otherwise uncared-for siblings to school while their parents are working, prompting the school board to develop a child care centre at the school.

**1900s** By now most communities around Ontario have kindergartens of some kind. In **1902** 13% of the labour force is made up of women working in textile factories. Most of these women are single.

**1918** Women win the right to vote in federal elections. This milestone in women's history is achieved after decades of advocacy by heroines such as **Nellie McClung** and **Dr. Mary Crawford** and Manitoba women who formed the Political Equality League in 1912.

**1919** **Agnes McPhail**, from Ontario, becomes the first woman elected to the federal government. Later, in **1943**, Agnes is also one of the first two women elected as an MPP in Ontario.

**1920s** In **1921**, after World War I, women have to hand their higher-paying manufacturing jobs back to returning soldiers and move to lower paying jobs if they want to stay in the workforce. In **1923** **Victoria Cheung** is the first Chinese woman to graduate from University of Toronto's medical school. In **1928**, the Olympic Games first allow women to enter. Canadian **Fanny Rosenfeld** wins both silver and gold in track and fellow Canadian **Ethel Catherwood** wins gold in the high jump. In 1928, **Anna Dexter** becomes Canada's first woman broadcaster.

**1929** **Women are people too!** Earlier in the 1920s **Emily Murphy** became the first woman appointed as a judge in Canada. However, male lawyers and defendants refused to accept her rulings, arguing that Emily, as a woman, is not a legal "person" under the Canadian constitution. Canada's Supreme Court agrees, but Emily and her supporters fight to have the ruling overturned by the British Privy Council. In 1929 they win the "Person's Case" which declared, for the first time, that women were persons too and that Canadian law applied to both men and women.

**1940s** In **1942**, during World War II, Ontario signs the *Dominion-Provincial War-Time Agreement* with the federal government which results in both levels of government sharing the costs of providing child care services to mothers working in war industries. THIS IS THE FIRST AND ONLY TIME WE HAD FULL PUBLIC FUNDING OF CHILD CARE IN CANADA. In **1945**, when the war ends, the federal government stops funding child care and Ontario threatens to close its 28 day nurseries. In **1946** child care is saved! The Day Nursery and the Day Care Parents' Association in Toronto successfully lobby to keep the day nurseries open. *The Day Nurseries Act* is passed. This is Canada's first child care law, providing a licensing system and provincial funding formulas. In **1947** *The Exclusion Act* is repealed giving Chinese and East Asian Canadian women and men the right to vote.

**1950s** In **1951** Ontario becomes the first province to legislate pay equity measures for women under the *Fair Employment Practices Act*. In **1957** **Ellen Fairclough**



becomes the first cabinet minister in the federal **Tory** government of John Diefenbaker. Also in 1957, the federal government finally allows Chinese-Canadian families to be reunited.

**1960s** During the 1960s **Judy LaMarsh** is active in the federal Liberal cabinet of Lester Pearson. Judy helps bring us the Canadian Pension Plan, lays the groundwork for Medicare and helps secure the Guaranteed Income Supplement in **1967**. In **1961** **Therese Casgrain**, a former leader of the Quebec Co-operative Commonwealth Federation (CCF), founds the Quebec chapter of *Voice of Women* to protest nuclear testing.

**“Pity the party  
without enough  
woman power!”**

Judy LaMarsh  
1968

**1970s** In **1971** **Jeannette Vivian Corbiere Lavell** launches a court challenge to *The Indian Act* to change it so that native women no longer lose their Indian status when marrying a non-native man. Jeannette’s case is the first in Canada to deal with discrimination based on sex, and her challenge is successful fourteen years later in **1985**. In **1972**, in British

Columbia, **Rosemary Brown** becomes the first woman of colour to win a seat in a Canadian legislature. In **1973** **Kay Livingstone** organizes the first *National Congress of Black Women* in Toronto. Also in **1973**, the first rape crisis centres open in Toronto and Vancouver and *Interval House*, one of the first shelters for abused women, opens.

**1980s** In **1982** **Bertha Wilson** becomes the first female Supreme Court judge. In **1984** **Jeanne Sauvé** becomes Canada’s first woman Governor General. In **1988** Canada’s abortion law is struck down, protecting a woman’s right to choose. In **1989** **Audrey McLaughlin** becomes the first woman to lead a national political party, the NDP, in Canada.

**1990s** In **1992** **Roberta Bondar** becomes the first Canadian woman in space. In **1993** **Jean Augustine** is the first African-Canadian woman elected to our federal government. Also in **1993** **Kim Campbell**, a Tory, becomes our first woman Prime Minister. In **1999** **Adrienne Clarkson**, a refugee from Hong Kong, is the first woman of colour to become Governor General.

**2000s** In **2000** the **Famous Five**—the 5 women who advocated successfully to have women declared persons in 1929—become the first Canadian women to be honoured with a statue on Parliament Hill in Ottawa.

## The Federal Government

### What it does and how it works

Canada is a **federation** of 10 provinces and 3 territories. The federal government is the highest level of government in Canada and it makes the laws for the entire country. Canada is based on the tradition of

**Responsible Government** which has held for centuries that government be made up of representatives who have to report to the people in their area.

### Who is the government?

The political party with the most **seats** after an election takes the lead role in forming Canada's government. If it has a majority of seats (151), it will automatically form a **majority government**. If it has fewer than 151 seats, the leading party will work in cooperation with the other parties to form a **minority government**.

**The Parliament:** Parliament is best understood as the process which incorporates three decision-making institutions that do the work of governing: the Queen, the Senate and the House of Commons. They work together to make the laws for our country and also make up one of the three “branches” of our system, the **legislative branch**. The other two branches are the **executive branch**, which carries out or “executes” the laws and includes the Prime Minister, the Cabinet and the Queen; and the **judicial branch**, which is made up of the courts in Canada that actually apply the laws. The judicial branch is *not* a part of Parliament.

**The Senate:** amends and either rejects or approves bills passed by the House of Commons. It is meant to represent the interests of Canada's regions, provinces, territories and minority groups. It has 105 seats.

**The House of Commons:** is the major law-making body in the federal government, or Parliament. It has 301 members, called **Members of Parliament** or MPs, elected as shown in this chart. As the representatives of the people, MPs make the decisions on spending public money and imposing taxes. The House of Commons sits, or meets, in Ottawa on **Parliament Hill**.

**The Speaker:** is elected by *all* the MPs and presides over the House of Commons and ensures that everyone respects its rules and traditions.

**The Prime Minister:** or “PM” is the leader of the party in power and is the Head of Government.

**The Cabinet:** is chosen by the Prime Minister and appointed by the Governor General. At least one member of Cabinet is from the Senate. Most also become **Cabinet Ministers** in charge of specific departments of our government—such as human resources or finance. They must report on their department's activities to Parliament on a regular basis. It is here, in Cabinet, that the most important decisions get made about government priorities and public policy. In today's system, it is here where the power is.

A key feature of Cabinet is the concept of collective responsibility, which means that all Ministers share responsibility for the administration of government and for its policies. They must *all* support a Cabinet decision. They may not agree with it, but they have to support it in public. If a Minister cannot support a decision,

	Seats
Area	
Ontario	103
Quebec	75
British Columbia	34
Alberta	26
Manitoba	14
Saskatchewan	14
Nova Scotia	11
New Brunswick	10
Newfoundland/Labrador	7
Prince Edward Island	4
Northwest Territories	1
Nunavut	1
Yukon Territory	1
TOTAL	301

he or she must resign from Cabinet. This principle is in place so that the House of Commons always has “confidence” in the government. If the House loses this confidence, it can ask for a [vote of non-confidence](#). If this vote passes then the Cabinet and government are forced to resign and make way for a new government or call an election.

Yes! Canada is [a constitutional monarchy](#). This is why the Queen plays such a central—though entirely ceremonial—role in our parliamentary system. She is our formal Head of State and the Queen, or her representative in Canada, must sign all bills, giving them [Royal Assent](#), before they can become laws.

This is also why we have a Governor General. This person is the Queen’s representative in Canada and is appointed on the advice of our Prime Minister. One of the most important roles of the Governor General is to ensure that Canada always has a Prime Minister. For example, if no party had a clear majority after an election, or if the PM were to die in office, the Governor General would have to choose a successor.

**The Leader of the Opposition:** is generally the leader of the party with the second largest membership in Parliament. This person leads opposition debates and suggests changes to government legislation or alternative proposals.

**The Critics:** are members of each of the other parties in Parliament who are assigned a specific ministry, like health or immigration. It is their job to critique the activities and legislation in their area and to present their party’s policies on the subject.

Each party in Parliament chooses a [House Leader](#), who meets once a week with the other House Leaders to discuss upcoming business in the Commons, and a [Whip](#), who makes sure that enough party members are in the House for debates and votes. Whips, in consultation with party leaders, also decide which party members will sit on which committees.

The traditional thinking about collective responsibility is that it ensures that everyone in the House of Commons has confidence in the government because it always presents a united and disciplined front. In fact, this approach is followed by all parties in parliament.

A current critique of this principle is that it actually muzzles the voices inside Cabinet that may contradict the PM or other Ministers and thus silences debates that should be part of a healthy democracy. Similarly, it deters opposing voices in any party being raised.

Maintaining collective responsibility is often referred to as enforcing party “discipline.”

What happens inside the House of Commons?

Inside the House of Commons is where the people we elect to represent our views and concerns make the laws of our country, and hold the government accountable for its actions. The elements in this process include:

**Member Statements:** A 15-minute period is set aside each day for any MP who is not a Cabinet Minister to make a one-minute statement on a subject of national, regional or local importance.

**Question Period:** A 45-minute period when opposition MPs, and sometimes government MPs, can ask questions of the Prime Minister and Cabinet Ministers. This is often a chance to hold the government accountable as there is no advance warning of what the questions might be.

**Adjournment Proceedings:** A MP who is dissatisfied with an answer given in Question Period can ask, in writing, for the matter to be raised again during the adjournment proceedings at the end of the day. A Cabinet Minister or **parliamentary secretary** responds.

**Private Members' Business:** A one hour period, each day, when Private Members (MPs who are not Cabinet Ministers) can have their bills and motions debated by the House. These items are selected in a draw and some of them are chosen to come to a vote.

**Notices of Motion for the Production of Papers:** The time when the government can respond to MPs' requests to present certain **documents to the House**.

**Introducing bills:** Any MP can introduce a bill for first reading. When the Cabinet does so it is part of their **Government Order**. When other MPs do so it is part of *Private Members' Business*.

## **OTHER AREAS WHERE MPs DO THEIR WORK**

**Caucus:** Weekly caucus meetings are a time for MPs and Senators of the same party to talk about policies and strategy. This is one of the key times when your local MP can bring your concerns to their larger party.

**Committees:** Committee work is an important part of a MP's job and the law-making process. Members can review bills in greater depth than is possible in the House and can study important issues such as child care, public education and the spending plans of federal departments.

How does a bill become a law?

### **The Legislative Process**

#### **First Reading**

The bill is considered read for the first time and is printed. There is no debate. Cabinet ministers usually introduce bills, but private members can also do so.

#### **Second Reading**

Members debate the bill's principle.  
If it passes at second reading, it goes to a committee for review.

### **Committee Stage**

Now the bill is carefully studied, hearings can be held  
and government offices asked for information.  
The committee can propose amendments, or changes, to the bill.

### **Report Stage**

The committee reports the bill back to the House when it is finished with it. Now  
all the MPs can debate it, and can suggest other amendments and changes to  
the bill.

### **Third Reading**

Once the reporting and debating are over, the bill is called for  
*third reading debate*. This is a crucial stage for any bill.  
MPs who voted for it at second reading may now change their minds after  
considering any changes that have occurred in the bill.  
Once a bill passes third reading it goes to the Senate.

### **Senate**

The bill follows a similar process to the one in the House.

### **Royal Assent**

The bill receives Royal Assent after being passed by both the House of  
Commons and the Senate. It is now a law. Royal Assent is given by the  
Governor General in the Senate Chamber with Senators and MPs present.

## **The Provincial Government of Ontario**

### **How does it work?**

Our provincial government in Ontario works in very much the same way as the federal government does. It is based on the same tradition of responsible government and is the over-reaching level of government for the entire province. Our elected representatives at this level are called **Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPS)** and together they make up our **Legislative Assembly**. The government is made up of the MPPs belonging to the party that won the election. The leader of the governing party is called **the Premier**. Elections are often called earlier than the five year deadline stipulated by law, usually at about the four year mark.

Many of the terms and procedures outlined in the previous section on the federal government apply to the Ontario government as well. For example, **the Speaker** fulfills the same role in both houses of government. Some important things to know that are specific to Ontario are:

### **The Hansard**

Hansard is the official word-for-word report of the debates in the House. It is named after the family that began the tradition in the House of Commons in Westminster, England. Thomas Hansard, whose father's printing firm started printing parliament's proceedings in 1774, became the official publisher of these reports in 1811.

Hansard officially began in Ontario in 1944. They were first typewritten and distributed to select people on onionskin carbon copies. Today, Hansard provides electronic reports, in French and English as the languages were used, of all verbal proceedings in the house and in committees. You can find Hansard reports on the internet just hours after debates have finished-go to [www.ontla.on.ca](http://www.ontla.on.ca) and click on the heading "Hansard."

Hansard is also used for the federal government and can be found at [www.parl.gc.ca/english/ebus.html](http://www.parl.gc.ca/english/ebus.html).

### **The Lieutenant**

**Governor:** is the provincial counterpart to the Governor General of Canada. He or she is the representative of the Queen in Ontario and is appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Prime Minister. In Ontario, it is the Lieutenant Governor who gives **Royal Assent** to each bill before it can become law.

**The Executive Council:** is the official name for our provincial Cabinet. It is made up of MPPs of the governing party and appointed by the Premier. As is the case federally, the Cabinet in Ontario works on a collective basis and all Cabinet Ministers are expected to support each bill the Cabinet puts forth to the House, or, if they cannot, resign. It is the Cabinet that introduces **Government Bills** to all the MPPs to vote on.

## **The Legislative Process**

How does a bill become a law in Ontario?

This process is remarkably similar to the process at the federal level. The one major difference is that Ontario does not have a Senate that the bill has to pass through to become law.

- 1—An idea is turned into a bill (see page 18 for more on this important process)
- 2—First Reading: the bill is introduced + explained
- 3—MPPs vote to accept bill for future debate
- 4—Bill now goes to either 2nd Reading or to committee
- 5—Second Reading: after debate MPPs vote to send bill to committee (or back to it).
- 6—Committee reports back to the house. Bill is voted to 3rd Reading or sent to the Committee of the Whole House
- 7—Third Reading: the final, formal vote
- 8-Royal Assent



If a government bill is defeated, it is often considered a **vote of non-confidence** in the government.

**The Legislative Chamber:** is in the middle of the Ontario Parliament Building in Queen's Park in Toronto. It is also known as the House. It is here that MPPs gather each day the government is **sitting** and where the business of introducing, debating and passing bills into laws takes place. **Question Period** and **Private Members' Public Business** (this usually takes place on Thursday mornings) also take place here.

**Standing Orders:** is the traditional name for the rules of procedure in the house. It is the Speaker's duty to see that these rules are followed.

**Orders and Notices:** is the official name for the daily publication of everything the House is to consider that day: bills, government business, private members' business, and committee information. It is also called the Order Paper.

**Legislative Committees:** are working groups created by the Ontario Legislative Assembly and made up of no more than 11 MPPs, reflecting the proportion of MPPs from each party in the House. Business is often referred to committees—especially proposed legislation—so that it can be reviewed in detail and points debated in a less formal setting. Individuals and groups are able to participate in the work of these committees and are often asked to make presentations and submit documents. When committees are finished their work, they bring a report back to the entire House. Standing Committees are permanent committees on such subjects as *Finance and Economic Affairs* and *Justice and Social Policy*. Committees that are set up on a one-time basis are called Select Committees.

**The Committee of the Whole House:** consists of all members of the house (all the MPPs). It meets in the Chamber at Queen's Park, but under less formal rules than when parliament is sitting. For example, an MPP can speak more than once on a bill. MPPs can also comment on, ask questions about and propose amendments to various sections of a bill. Individuals and groups *cannot* participate in these proceedings.

## Downloading

Since January 1998, the Ontario government, under the Tory Premiers Mike Harris and Ernie Eves, has introduced legislation making more and more costs related to many social services the responsibility of municipalities instead of the province. We refer to this situation as *downloading*. Downloading has affected many services including child care, social housing, welfare, public education, ambulance services and libraries. The main problem with downloading is that while the

province has made municipalities responsible for paying for more of these services, they did not give them more money, or new ways to raise more money, to actually *pay* for their increased share of these services. At the same time additional provincial funding cuts to most of these services have made downloading even harder to bear.

Child care programs and services previously funded by the province have lost over \$160 million dollars since 1995 and are now cost-shared, with the province putting in 80% and municipalities responsible for 20%. The result is that many local governments describe the underfunding of child care as chronic. One way they are responding to the shortage of provincial dollars is by reallocating funds from one program area to another. This tactic often presents problems elsewhere. Local governments point to insufficient dollars for fee subsidies, wage enhancements, special needs resources, and family resource centres. Another common problem is growing waiting lists for child care services.

Downloading has impacted similarly on the delivery of public education, social housing, and other community services.

## Municipal Government

Municipal elections are held every three years in Ontario. The municipal government is the most accessible level of government. This is where you have the greatest change of being heard. Many municipal councils provide opportunities for you to express your views directly to the relevant committee and into their budget process. One way of doing this is to prepare a deputation to the committee mandated to take action on the issue you care about. Steps to take to find out when your city or town is hearing deputations and tips on writing and presenting deputations are available at [www.childcaretoronto.org](http://www.childcaretoronto.org).

### How does it work in Toronto?

Toronto City Council is comprised of the **Mayor** and 44 City **Councillors**, one representing each of the city's wards.

Toronto City Council accomplishes its work through a **standing committee** system. Each committee is made up of a number of councillors and it is here where most policy development work takes place. Each standing committee has a clear set of responsibilities and distinct mandates in areas of public service delivery including monitoring current program delivery and recommending policy and program changes. Each committee also provides a forum for public participation and for detailed discussion of the city's decision making. Three important committees in Toronto are:

**The Community Services Committee** is responsible for social development policies and community grants, housing and homelessness, child care, social assistance and employment programs, emergency shelter and assistance, seniors' services and fire and ambulance services, emergency planning and communications.

## TORONTO CITY COUNCIL



Advisory Committee

## PUBLIC INPUT

The **Policy and Finance Committee** is responsible for setting financial priorities and recommending the annual budget. It monitors budget performance and recommends in-year changes to vary city spending from the approved annual budget.

The **Budget Advisory Committee** assists the Policy and Finance Committee by coordinating the preparation of the annual capital and operating budget and reviewing other matters having a significant impact on a future budget.

## Municipal Government

How does it work in *YOUR* community?

Each municipal government requests public input differently. For example, the City of Sudbury hosts a Mayor's Children First Roundtable in which community members are invited to participate. Another example are the 16 community advisory committees and boards involving citizen volunteers in Ottawa.

The most important thing for you to find out in order to be involved in the decisions of your community's municipal government is *how it works!* If you don't live in Toronto, take the time to call the **City Clerk's Office** at your municipal government and fill out the blank chart below (use it as a guide) —or use your town's website if they have one.

Council				

FIND YOUR MUNICIPAL CLERK by calling the Association of Municipal Managers, Clerks and Treasurers in Ontario (AMMCTO) at **905-602-4294**.  
FIND YOUR MUNICIPAL WEBSITE at  
<http://199.202.235.157/vlg/ontario.html#COUNTIES>.

## How do we use these political systems to maximize woman power?

There is no denying that our current political systems are remote and uninviting. Our elected representatives spend most of their time out of the public eye in meetings and retreats that are closed to the public. Our ability to influence public policy through communication with our politicians has decreased over the last number of years. Gone are the days when months of public hearings were held across Ontario to collect public input into any important piece of law or policy and when premiers attended child care lobby meetings.

Even those meetings that are still open to the public, for example a community services committee meeting in your municipality, are hard to get a handle on: When do they meet? How do you get on the agenda to make a deputation? How do the decisions made at this level move on in the process to affect the bill or policy? What is the next step? And our most public of political moments – business that takes place in our parliaments and municipal council chambers – are veiled in mysterious language and alienating rules and traditions: how is a second reading different from a third reading in the development of a bill into a law? What's going on during Question Period? And what is [the mace](#) anyway, and why does it have to be in the legislature before a government can get down to business? Identifying with the majority of those elected to “represent” us is difficult as well – they are still mostly white, middle-aged, middle-class men after all. Recognizing that government is alienating and difficult to use is important. But even more important is recognizing the opportunities for input. Even though we are in a period of restricted public input to government decision-making, it does not have to stay that way. There are still very important places in the system that we can, and must, take advantage of so that we are able to reverse the current trend and start to change things for the better.

This is what we mean by using the current system to maximize woman power. Maximizing woman power means finding ways to influence our current government decision-making processes in favour of the things that will better women's lives and promote our economic equality and security—things like child care, affordable and safe housing, income security and real measures to protect women from domestic violence. Maximizing woman power is also about using today's access points to influence policy towards reforming our democratic systems. In this way we will create systems that give us fairer and more equal access to government power that in turn will allow us to promote public policy that is good for women.

So, what are some of the ways that we can use our current systems to maximize woman power?

1. **We must use the opportunities that are still open to the public.** This includes the committee hearings that happen at all levels of government. Often women's voices are not well represented during these consultations with the public, either because the women affected haven't come to the hearings (which is not surprising given how hard it is to find out about them in most areas!), or because the elements that make the issue relevant for women haven't been identified by the politician proposing the legislation. But don't let either of these two things stop you.

#### HERE ARE SOME TIPS:

► **Monitor** the committee in the level of government that is responsible for the issue or issues that concern you and your community. The chart on page 24 will help you find them.

► **Attend** committee meetings – they are open to the public and this is a good way to get started, especially at the municipal level. When you are ready, make a **deputation**. When the particular piece of legislation or policy is coming up for debate, get yourself or a spokesperson for your group, on the deputation list. Bring your supporters along. This makes an impression with politicians on the committee and any media present.

► **Participate** in pre-budget hearings and any special hearings set up on “hot” issues. There are still times when public input at a series of province-wide hearings changes our MPPs' minds—for example, the hearings on the private-school tax credit held in 2001 forced the government to postpone it. Sometimes the Premier will hold special public consultations on various issues—you can monitor the Premier's website to find out more at [www.premier.gov.on.ca](http://www.premier.gov.on.ca).

2. **Build a relationship with one or two politicians who you trust on your issue** at each level of government – this may be your local councillor, MPP or MP. Or it may be the politician, often called the “**critic for**” children, disability issues, housing or women's issues, assigned to your issue's **portfolio**.

This is one good way of getting into the loop of what is going on inside any level of government and means that you can relax a bit about always being on top of every opportunity to influence the process. Your friendly politician will notify you when an important moment is coming up as they want your and your community's support for the issue as much as you want them to speak up inside the system on your behalf. Think of this person as your ally in the struggle to promote women's issues inside the government of the day and you'll be on the right track.

It is through your relationship with this politician and her (or his) office that you can start to influence other moments inside council or parliament to your advantage. In both the federal and provincial levels of government there are times in House debates for **Members' Statements**, **Question Period** and **Private Members Business**. The staff in your MP's or MPP's office will be more than happy to have your advice and input into a statement or a question for their MP or MPP to deliver during

Question Period. Working with your allies in office is a great opportunity not to be overlooked.

**3. Take advantage of opportunities during the stages of a bill's journey into law.** Second and Third Readings and committee hearings are all places where you and/or your group can exert influence and help to produce the actions you want from your MPPs and/or politicians responsible for your issue.

When a bill you care about is being debated, make sure that your MPP knows that you want them to speak and vote either for it or against it. Explain why and provide some background information to help your MPP do a good job. Remember that you'll often know more about the issue than they do and they'll be happy to have your help and support.

And, on the days your bill is being debated at Queen's Park, go! Fill the galleries with supporters of your position and make sure the MPP speaking on your behalf knows you are there. This show of support can sometimes influence the votes of many MPPs in the house and perhaps win the vote for you.

**4. Help create a bill in the first place!** That's right, you can work with your MPP or the politician responsible for your issue, in what is called the pre-legislative process (what happens before a bill is presented to the legislature for First Reading), to

actually draft a **Private Member's public bill** or even lobby government members and/or Cabinet Ministers to develop a government bill that furthers your group's interests.

**How do you know when a certain bill is going to be debated in the House?**

Visit the website of Ontario's Legislative Assembly at [www.ontla.on.ca](http://www.ontla.on.ca), click on "House Business" and monitor the **Orders and Notices Paper** which lists the next two weeks of upcoming business. also, every Thursday at 3:30 p.m. in Ontario, the House Leader announces the following week's business.

Additionally, if you've established a good relationship with the politician involved, their staff will keep you informed and should be available to answer your questions.

**Again, there are two important things to remember:**

1. You and the people you are working with to effect change are the experts in your field. *You* know the most about what is needed for child care, affordable housing or anti-violence measures in Ontario. Those in parliament responsible for your issue want to hear from you and know that your experience and support will benefit them.

2. The political processes we use in Ontario and Canada today are meant to represent you and your concerns. The MPP elected in your riding is there to represent you—this means that they have a duty to listen to your ideas and to respond to your suggestions for action. So, do not be nervous about bringing an idea to a politician—it's one of the reasons they're there!



Establishing a good relationship with one or two MPPs and their staff as discussed earlier will help you immensely if you decide to suggest an idea for a bill and will allow for you to play a meaningful role in drafting the terms and objectives of the bill.

**5. Get directly involved in politics.** Be a candidate yourself or support someone from your group in running for office. One direct way to increase woman power in your local community, in Ontario and in Canada is to elect more women. Maximizing woman power is about supporting our sisters who seek elected office, encouraging more to do so and seeking out and supporting our allies – both women and men – inside the halls of power.

“So, picture this: Parliament convenes after a stunning federal election. A newly sworn-in cabinet...meets for the first time...Women are in the majority; it’s an historic moment, thanks to a huge revolution in Canadian politics...After decades of voting for men who universally failed to keep their commitments to women and children, Canadian women got mad, got militant, and threw the buzzards out...

Just as there has to be a “critical mass” of women in Parliament before there are enough women’s washrooms, there will have to be real female power—that is, a majority of women will have to vote for their own interests—before early childhood care and education for all are an absolute given.”

**Michele Landsberg. Toronto Star. 2003**

Use this chart to help you find who is working on your issue at each level of government. We’re using child care as our example here, but the chart can be used with any other issue—like public education, housing, women or immigration.

Committee at each level of government	Contact Info	Key politicians at each level of government	Contact Info
Check with your municipal clerk’s office; Ask for the committee dealing with children and/or child care.	Check your yellow pages or see page 19.	Check with your municipal clerk’s office or your Mayor’s office; Ask for the councillor(s) most out-spoken on child care and for the chairs of committees dealing with children, education or child care.	Check your yellow pages or see page 19.

Ministry of Community, Family and Children's Services (MCFCS)	416-325-0500 or <a href="http://www.cfcs.gov.on.ca">www.cfcs.gov.on.ca</a>  You can find regional office contact info on the website as well.	Minister—MCFCS (the Minister is always from the party forming the government-as of publication, this is the PC party)  Children's Critics from the opposition parties. As of publication, these are the NDP and Liberal parties.	416-325-5225 or 1-888-789-4199  Call each Caucus at Queen's Park and ask who their critic is: NDP—416-325-8300 Liberal-416-325-7200 PC-416-325-7272
Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC)	Try calling the federal government information service at 1-800-O-Canada. You can also contact your local Member of Parliament (MP) for info.	Minister of HRDC (the Minister is always from the party forming the government-as of publication, this is the Liberal party)  Children's Critics from the opposition parties. As of publication, these are the Canadian Alliance (CA), the NDP and the Progressive Conservative (PC) parties.	(613) 992-3118  Use this website to see list of ministers and critics in Ottawa and ask who their critic is: <a href="http://www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/key/Critic.asp?lang=E&amp;source=hoc">www.parl.gc.ca/information/about/people/key/Critic.asp?lang=E&amp;source=hoc</a>

## What is ECEC?

### Why is it good for all of us?

Early Childhood Education and Care (ECEC) is the term used to describe high quality child care. Most importantly, ECEC does not separate early learning from care, but understands early learning and care to be delivered by trained early childhood educators in one seamless service. Educational child care is one of the most important public services in Ontario, not just for children, their families and society, but also for women. High quality educational child care

- ◆ furthers children's development
- ◆ supports parents in working and studying
- ◆ helps reduce poverty
- ◆ fosters social inclusion for children and their families

ECEC is also a key part of

- ◆ Social and community economic development
- ◆ Any social justice strategy
- ◆ Any population health approach
- ◆ Preventing crime at the community level
- ◆ Equity, social inclusion, human development and freedom.

These are all things that affect women's lives daily. Working women need regulated, public child care because

- ◆ It allows women to work!
- ◆ It gives mothers peace trust the care their of mind to children are in while working to provide them a good future.
- ◆ It give women more choices.  
It allows working women more opportunities to achieve equity in the workplace.

Delivering high quality ECEC means putting in place a range of community services for children and parents. The most important of these are government-regulated programs in child care centres, nursery schools, kindergartens and family day care, provided or supported by well-trained and well-paid ECEC workers.

As the diagram on page 25 shows, quality early childhood education and care provides many benefits to society, including economic ones. Economists have calculated that every \$1 invested in child care brings \$2 in social and economic benefits.

## The GLOBAL CONTEXT

### Universal early childhood education and care is not an impossible dream.

Our sisters in other countries are leading the way.

**FINLAND:** As of 1996, a child care space is guaranteed as a right to every family that wants one; and, as of 2001, free voluntary pre-school education is provided in every municipality.

**The CZECH REPUBLIC:** provides early education and care as a public service. Eighty-six percent of children aged 3-6 years old are in public, full-day pre-school.

**PORTUGAL** expanded its early childhood education and care system in the late 1990s to achieve spaces for almost 75% of pre-schoolers.

**JAMAICA** is spending over \$1 billion this year to fully integrate day care with ECEC, including a focus on training early childhood educators.

**SIR LANKA** now has a *National Policy on Early Childhood Development*.

### Unions and child care

Unions bargain, and often win, paid leaves for care of children and elders, child care subsidies and workplace child care centres. Unions often lead the fight for more public child care funding, for higher standards to define high quality child care and for higher wages for child care workers. They are also leaders in the struggle to close the wage

gap between women and men, for pay equity legislation and have made important gains for pay equity through bargaining in the workplace.

## PAY EQUITY

Pay equity means paying people equal wages for work of equal value. Pay equity is something people started talking about in the 1950s because women doing the same work as men were being paid less. This led to equal pay for equal work legislation. Before then governments were helping to keep women's wages lower than men's! For example in the early 1900s base salaries for women were set lower than men's and it wasn't until the early 1970s that the lower minimum wage for women was done away with in Canada.

Today, after much hard work by women's advocates, *The Canadian Human Rights Act* identifies unequal pay for work of equal value as discrimination against women and against workers in female-dominated jobs. We now have equal pay legislation federally and in most provinces, including Ontario. However, despite these gains there continues to be a significant **wage gap** in Ontario and in Canada. **In 2003 women in Canada make an average of 72 cents for every dollar earned by a man. Wages are even lower for older women, or for visible minority women. And this gap is closing ever so slowly, with a gain of only 8% in the last 30 years.**

**Pay equity is not a privilege or a frill. It is the law.**

**Equal Pay Coalition,  
2003**

We must keep advocating to close this wage gap. Success in pay equity is a key part of increasing our woman power and essential not only for achieving economic security and autonomy for women but also for the health and well-being of women and their families.

**In Ontario today** we have pay equity legislation, but it is not working well enough. The *Pay Equity Act* was introduced in 1988. It was amended in 1993 to include **proxy pay equity** adjustments to correct lower wages paid to those working in female-dominated jobs. Also in 1993 all employers with more than 10 employees were required to spend 1% of the previous year's payroll on salary increases until pay equity is achieved. Government funding was provided to help community-based and non-profit organizations meet these payments. However, in 1995 the new Tory government immediately stopped public funding support for pay equity payments. They lost a court case over this decision in 1998 and made just one more payment before freezing funding again. In 2003 they settled a second court challenge and now have to correct proxy pay equity funding for public sector employees.

**The Suffragette Movement  
in Ontario:  
a 50 Year Struggle**

**1886**—The Women's Literary League, the first women's [suffrage](#) group in Canada, is founded in Toronto.

**April 12, 1917** – The Ontario Franchise Act makes legal a woman's right to vote in Ontario.\*

**January 1, 1919** — Women achieve the right to vote in federal elections across Canada. The legislation was passed earlier on May 24, 1918. (Some war-time legislation did allow women enlisted in the army, mainly as nurses, to vote in the 1917 federal elections.)

This 1919 law does not include First Nations or Chinese-Canadian women in Canada.

**April 24, 1919** – Women in Ontario now have the right to run for provincial office.

\*NOTE: Beyond the federal right, the right to vote had to be won province by province, with Quebec being the last provincial victory in 1940.

## Elections: useful tools for Woman Power

Election periods are exciting times and provide great opportunities for getting people talking about women's issues. During elections there are moments when you can actually see your contribution making a difference. When the question you ask at an [all-candidates' debate](#) sparks off the room and forces the women and men asking to represent you to make their positions clear and to make commitments; or when you change someone's mind during a [door-to-door canvas](#) by sharing your point of view and some new information – you know that what you are advocating has a chance.

Elections are the times when politicians are held accountable – when we, the people, have a chance to show them what we think of their record. They are also the time to further our own issues. There is more opportunity to talk about what we want from our governments regarding anti-violence measures, poverty or child care, and real opportunities to cement commitments from all parties on what *they* would do for women if elected. If we do our job right, once any party is elected, we have more to work with - more promises to demand that they deliver on.

### WHY VOTE?

Voting is one of the most basic tools of democracy at your disposal. It is your voice and using it is your tool to have your say in who is going to represent you for the next four or five years in the federal and provincial parliaments or three years on municipal council.

Women's right to vote was a victory hard won by many determined and brave women who came before us. In Canada, most women "got the vote" in 1918. First Nations women had to wait until 1960! We honour them by walking into our polling stations on voting day and exercising that right.

**Voting is also your moment of power.** Together, with other women and people who care about child care, affordable housing, education or healthcare, an election period is when you can mobilize voters to use their voting power to influence the election agenda and determine its outcome. *We* have the voting power to set the future political direction of Ontario and Canada, so let's use it!

### **IMAGINE IF EVERY WOMAN VOTED?**

In Ontario today women make up 51 % of the electorate. If we all voted we would create a strong voting block and have a powerful force at our disposal. In fact, there have been times in recent history where the women's vote has decided the outcomes of elections. For example, the federal Liberal majority in Canada in 1997 was due to the women's vote.

Other powerful things happen when more women vote. More women gain knowledge of public and political issues, increasing their power. More women actually get involved in the political process even after the election is over. Having more women involved in political action furthers women's equality and independence.

### **Every vote for child care is a good vote!**

The more MPPs we elect to fight for regulated child care the better. This is true even if they are not all from the same party that makes up the government. History teaches us that good public policy often happens with minority governments.

A **minority government**, which happens when there are more opposition seats than government seats, can often be led by members of the opposition parties joining forces to make progressive changes.

Child care wins when we all vote for the candidate who will fight to insure high quality, affordable and regulated child care for all children! **GO TO** [www.childcareontario.org](http://www.childcareontario.org) **TO FIND OUT HOW TO VOTE FOR CHILDCARE in Ontario.**

### **Not everyone got the vote at the same time!**

Canada's history includes more than discrimination against women. From the earliest days of European exploitation of Aboriginal people through out 500 years of racism, classism and ethnic discrimination towards various different groups of people, "Canadians" have used political, social and economic structures to dominate others. For example, it was only white women that won the right to vote in 1918. **East Indian and Asian women and men had to wait until 1947 and First Nations women and men until 1960.**

**How to use elections:** Key points and places in an election period to insert our voices and increase woman power.



► Find out who your candidates are – a list of all the parties' provincial offices and their websites is below.



- ▶ Call your riding associations for events – you can find them on the parties' provincial websites or by calling their offices (see below).
- ▶ Go and visit your candidates – talk to them about the issues you care about and ask them what *they will do* if elected.
- ▶ Attend an all-candidates' debate – get up and ask them a question – go one step further and take flyers with you and hand them out to everyone in the audience!
- ▶ Work with others to organize an all-candidates' debate.
- ▶ Write a letter to the editor.
- ▶ JOIN with others.....make a flyer outlining your candidates' positions on child care and do some public leafleting outside a mall or public transit station during rush hour.
- ▶ JOIN with others.....in a door-to-door canvas of your community.
- ▶ **VOTE!**
- ▶ Find out all you can about how to vote—educating others on how and when they should vote is an important thing we can all do to increase the power of voting by getting as many people to vote as possible—use the website [www.electionsontario.on.ca](http://www.electionsontario.on.ca) for Ontario rules and procedures.

▶ You can find tips and helpful information on doing all of the above at [www.childcareontario.org](http://www.childcareontario.org) Other helpful websites for information on specific issues, some with fact sheets and flyers you can download to use during any election period are:

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario—[www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca)

Ontario Federation of Labour—[www.ofl-fto.on.ca](http://www.ofl-fto.on.ca)

Canadian Auto Workers—[www.caw.ca](http://www.caw.ca)

Canadian Union of Public Employees—[www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca)

Ontario Health Coalition—[www.web.net/ohc](http://www.web.net/ohc)

Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (Housing/Homelessness) - [www.tdrc.net](http://www.tdrc.net)

Campaign 2000 (Child Poverty) - [www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca)

**HOW TO FIND YOUR ELECTION CANDIDATES:**

Progressive Conservative Party: Provincial Office — 416-861-0020 or 1-866-317-9145. [www.ontariopc.com](http://www.ontariopc.com)

The Ontario Liberal Party: Provincial Office – 416-961-3800 or 1-800-268-7250. [www.ontarioliberal.com](http://www.ontarioliberal.com)

The Ontario NDP: Provincial Office – 416-591-8637. [www.ontariondp.on.ca](http://www.ontariondp.on.ca)

The Green Party of Canada: Head Office - 613-235-7687. [www.green.ca](http://www.green.ca)

**Democratic Reform**  
How it can increase woman power

In addition to getting more women involved in today's political systems, we must also *change* these systems so that women have increased access to decision-making roles. Changing these structures means that we are also changing current definitions of power to move them away from male-dominated, hierarchical values to views of power as something exercised more inclusively and collectively for the common good. Changing how we vote people into office is one way that we can increase the potential for women's power in politics.

### First Past the Post (FPTP)

The way that we elect our MPs and MPPs today is often called the "First Past the Post" or the "Winner Takes All" system. This is because the elected seat goes to the person who gets the most votes. In other words, the person in the lead wins, even if they don't get over 50% of the votes cast. What does this mean for the state of democracy in Canada today?

- A MP or MPP is elected even if they only win by 1 vote, or if only, for example, 35% of the people voted for him or her. All they have to do is have more votes than any other candidate.
- Often the majority of people in any given riding will not have their views represented in government. These are all the people who voted for the candidates coming in second and third and fourth, none with enough votes to beat the winner, but together collecting the majority of the votes.
- Therefore, for the most part in Ontario and Canada, we are governed by the *minority*. For example, the last four elections in Ontario resulted in governments that were selected by less than 50% of voters. Federally, our last election in 2000 resulted in the Liberal Party having complete control of the House of Commons even though they won only 29% of [the popular vote](#) on election day.

### Proportional Representation

One way that we can change the way that we elect people today is to move to a system of Proportional Representation (PR). PR will generate a more democratic governing body and more equality in elected representation for women and other currently marginalized groups.

Simply put, PR is a voting system that would make sure that **"the number of seats each party holds in Parliament should be proportional to its share of the popular vote. For example, a party with 40% of the vote should have about 40% of the seats."** (Fair Vote Canada, 2003). This means that the number of seats a political party holds in Ottawa or in Queen's Park honestly reflects the public support they have. It also means that many more voters are able to elect people to speak on their behalf. A system of PR would benefit voting groups such as women and racial minorities. These groups would have a greater chance of winning a seat in the power structure for their representatives if public support at the ballot box was translated based on its proportion of the whole rather than if they got the most votes or not. In other words, women and candidates of colour could no longer be denied power simply because they didn't get the largest block of votes.

There are a variety of types of PR voting systems in use around the world in countries such as Germany, Ireland, South Africa, Israel, New Zealand, Scotland, and Wales. These types include:

**Party Lists:** In this system each party puts forward a list of candidates in **multi-seat districts** and voters vote for the list

Access to power FPTP vs. PR			
candidate	% of votes won	% of power under FPTP	% of power under PR
1	43	100%	43%
2	25	0%	25%
3	17	0%	17%
4	10	0%	10%
5	5	0%	5%

they prefer rather than individual candidates. If one party's list wins 40% of the vote, and there are 10 seats in that district then that party would get 4 seats. The party list system benefits women and minority groups because parties will encourage women and minority candidates to join the list to increase their party's popularity. In this way the party list system creates a political reality which includes both minority representation and majority rule.

**Preference Voting** is a system that uses multi-seat ridings where voters select a number of individual candidates in each riding ranked by preference. Each voter gets one vote that transfers to her second choice if her first choice doesn't win and so on.

**Mixed Proportional** is the system of PR which mixes the Winner Takes All or FPTP system and the party list system.

One thing all systems of PR have in common is that they tend to create governments where a diversity of voices are represented. This means that current "majority" governments that have absolute power to make public policy decisions that affect us all based solely on their own limited interests would be a thing of the past. Under PR a variety of parties would share power instead, resulting in dialogue and debate across party and interest group lines before any new laws and policies would be agreed upon. The final result would be public policy that is closer to the majority will of the people of Ontario and Canada.

People vote when they know that their vote will make a difference. Bringing PR to Ontario and make many own votes

PLEASE SEE [www.fairvotecanada.org](http://www.fairvotecanada.org)  
FOR MORE DETAILS

Canada can more of our count too.

This is especially true for women in Ontario today as women, for the most part, did not vote for the conservative, largely male, government that is currently in power (Rebick,2000:66).

## Participatory Democracy

Participatory Democracy (PD) tries to involve as many citizens as possible in real decision-making roles. Its goal is to move us beyond our current system of representative democracy, where we essentially elect others to *represent* our views in government.

Participatory democracy values people's opinions and respects their ability to *participate directly* in making decisions that bind the government to deliver what is best for society. It makes community interest the focus of the decisions, and not the interest of political parties or elite groups.

The most famous example of PD today is from Porto Alegre in Brazil where a city of 1 million people actually decides the spending priorities of the municipal budget. The process allows the direct participation of at least 20,000 people through regional and sectoral people's forums and a people's budget council. [A good Canadian website to use for more information on PD and links is www.socialaction.ca.](http://www.socialaction.ca)

## PR is better for women

"Electing more women to legislatures is not only a matter of fairness, wider representation and affirmative action. Practically speaking, the presence of women in legislatures makes a qualitative and quantitative difference in the types of legislation that are proposed and passed into law...countries with proportional representation...have enacted more laws that benefit women and children.

"Research shows that the number one predictor of women's success in national legislative elections, when tested with other political and socio-economic variables, is the presence of proportional representation (PR) voting systems.

"Furthermore, countries that use PR exclusively elect many times more women to their legislatures compared to countries that use winner take all exclusively, with countries like **Sweden** (41%), **Finland** (39%), **Norway** (36%), **Denmark** (33%), **The Netherlands** (29%) and **South Africa** (25%) leading the way."

Dr. Wilma Rule and Steven Hill  
"Ain't I A Voter?"  
Voting Rights for Women, 1996

## Advocacy 101 Getting Started

### What is advocacy?

To advocate is to give support to a cause. We can advocate on behalf of individuals facing an injustice and we can advocate together as groups trying to solve a particular problem. Often, advocacy includes trying to bring about change—change for the better in one individual's circumstances or change for a whole group or class of individuals. The latter is the realm of advocating for [systemic change](#) or for social change.

Women are already great advocates in their daily lives. Women watch out for what their families and friends need in any number of situations and can usually get things done for the better. Being advocates together on a broader social and political level will bring about the changes required in society so that women can achieve economic and social equality. There are a variety of forms that this advocacy takes. The most basic, and one of the most important, is educating those around you—those in your personal web—on the issues you care about. Changing things really does happen one person at a time.

The famous words of Margaret Mead are enduringly true because they echo this reality.

**“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.”**

### **There are a variety of forms that advocacy can take, including**

- speaking out for a wronged individual or group
- doing awareness raising work, like organizing a public forum
- signing or circulating a petition
- discussing a political issue, even when it may make people uncomfortable (for example, at a family dinner)
- lobbying politicians for change
- joining a march or rally
- making a deputation
- joining a sit-in
- participating in a strike
- distributing leaflets
- writing a letter to the editor
- donating to a political cause
- engaging in street theatre

### **Educate! Organize! Agitate!**

As people who care about certain issues—be it child care, women’s equality or raising the minimum wage—it is our responsibility to educate others around us. The old saying “knowledge is power” really is true. Lack of knowledge is the number one reason why people don’t get involved in an issue—even if they think that something is wrong or that things should be better.

It is our job as active women to educate ourselves and others as much as possible on the details of our issue, the political system we find ourselves in and how we can make a difference. In fact, in today’s political climate where we have relatively little access to power and decision-making, educating others about the current reality and what some of the alternatives are is one of the most important things we can do.

This education is active in spirit—it takes place in the communities and workplaces that we find ourselves in—our homes, faith groups, child care centres, shelters, schools and offices. As we educate in these active settings we must also create ways that others can be active in our work—host discussion groups, bring people along with you to lobby meetings, support others in speaking out. In so actively educating, we start to organize, to agitate.

### **KNOWLEDGE IS POWER.**

Giving people information, increasing knowledge, is the best way to stir things up!

## Lobbying

Another effective advocacy tool is lobbying your political representatives. This means working to persuade a politician to support or oppose change. The best thing about lobbying is that it works! By introducing yourself and your cause to the politician elected to represent your views in government you are engaging in the political process. Lobbying works because, through time and effort, you can educate your MP or MPP on your issue and turn them into a strong voice on your behalf. Lobbying is about creating and maintaining citizen input into the decisions made by our elected leaders. Lobbying is also an excellent way for women to learn more about how the current political systems work and how they can be used to make further progress on their issues. This knowledge will also help interested women decide if they are willing and able to jump in and run for office themselves. Many politicians started out just like this—getting involved because they cared about an issue and deciding to get inside the “halls of power” to get things done!

### *Some important things to remember about lobbying are:*

- *All politicians can and should be lobbied. It's part of their job. In fact, politicians technically work for you – the people!*
- *It is their duty to know what their constituents think and to acquaint themselves with all sides of an issue. You can help educate them.*
- *Those who are friendly to your position may give you more time. However, even those opposed can be affected by a direct show of community support.*
- *You do not have to be a political expert to lobby. You just need to communicate the effect of the issue in your community.*

When it comes to issues like child care, education or poverty you are the expert. Most politicians – especially newly elected ones – have little knowledge on the issue you are there to discuss with them.

### *There are different ways to lobby*

*including making phone calls to your elected representatives, writing letters and going in person to meet with him or her. All are effective.*

*Politicians rank the public support your issue has based on your efforts in the following way:*

- ◆ *each phone call = 10 other people who feel the same way*
- ◆ *each letter = 100 people*
- ◆ *each visit to their office = 10,000s!*

**“When I dare to be powerful-  
to use my strength in the service of my vision,  
then it becomes less and less important whether I  
am afraid.”**

Audre Lorde



*Do not underestimate the power of letting politicians know what you think about an issue. With elections only happening every 3-5 years, this is the only way that they have of finding out what their constituents think. If it is your voice that speaks up, it will be your issue that gets attention!*

## Feminist principles of organizing

In order to achieve the longest lasting success, it is important that the spirit of the advocacy goals and strategies match. For example, if your objective is world peace, then your advocacy efforts must also be guided by peaceful strategies and tactics.

If your advocacy efforts make your community stronger at the end of the process than it was at the start, you are successful. Regardless of the overt success or failure of an action, advocacy is creating change when it builds your group and the movement, fosters community leadership, builds solidarity amongst previously divided groups and aims to transform a particular situation and the people in it.

One way of ensuring the success of your actions is to consider the feminist model of consensus decision-making as opposed to the traditional "follow the guy with the megaphone" approach. The feminist approach focuses on communicating and sharing power. It is about promoting equality and opportunities for education and growth of those engaged in the advocacy. The feminist principles of organizing include:

- ⊙ Making the goal of any action to transform the situation, as opposed to conquering or beating the opposition
- ⊙ Focusing the advocacy on the issue—for example on a power imbalance, a particular unjust act or decision, role or position of a person, *and not on the individual themselves*
- ⊙ Using [general consensus decision-making](#)
- ⊙ Creating space for *all* voices, where every voice and skill is respected
- ⊙ Putting the emphasis in planning on supporting participants and securing group accountability
- ⊙ Defining a sense of the parameters within which participants are asked to act as part of the planning process
- ⊙ Thinking about decentralizing roles - letting people take part where they feel most comfortable

### **4 things a woman should ask of every social issue or policy:**

**1—How does it affect women and other equality seeking groups?**

**2—Who is benefiting here?  
Whose power is being protected or strengthened?**

**3—What expertise and knowledge from my experience as a woman can I bring to this issue and related advocacy?**

**4—How does it affect different women differently? How the same?  
And how can we find strength in our diversity to support each other in our journeys to equality and power?**

## Glossary

**all candidates' debate:** An event to which all the candidates in your riding are invited to speak on their positions and their party's election platforms. After each candidate has spoken, the audience is able to ask them questions.

**cabinet ministers:** A government MP or MPP appointed to the cabinet. They introduce and debate bills and formulate government policy. Each minister is responsible for a specific area, such as education or finance.

**candidate:** The person elected by each political party in a riding to compete in an election to represent the people of that riding in municipal, provincial or federal government.

**caucus retreat:** A private meeting of all the elected members from one party.

**city clerk and city clerk's office (or municipal clerk and office):** The person or office (in bigger areas where more than one person is required to do the job) that is responsible for the administration of a city's or municipality's business.

**constitutional monarchy:** A system of government in which the supreme law is the nation's constitution but the head of state is the monarch. In Canada the head of state is the Queen of England, represented by the Governor General and in the provinces by the Lieutenant Governor.

**councillor:** An elected representative to a city or municipal government.

**critic for:** The MP or MPP from the parties in political and federal parliaments who are NOT the government and who are assigned the same portfolios as cabinet ministers in order to critique their work in specific areas.

**deputation:** A speech and/or proposal made by an individual or group to a government committee to make them aware of how a specific service or issue affects them and make policy suggestions.

**door-to-door canvas:** Knocking on doors in any given neighbourhood in order to talk to people about an issue and/or candidate in an election.

**executive branch or council:** Also called the cabinet and composed of the government leader (the Prime Minister or the Premier) and the ministers who exercise executive power. This branch *executes* the laws.

**federation:** a government or political body established through federal union, meaning that power is shared between a central authority and a number of constituent political units.

**general consensus decision-making:** A process that focuses on discussing differences of opinions in an open and respectful way until everyone involved agrees with the final decision.

**government bills:** Public bills that are sponsored by the government.

**government orders:** Any items of business (such as motions or bills) that the government puts on the House of Commons' agenda.

**house leader:** Each party appoints a House Leader who is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the party in the legislature. House Leaders meet weekly to plan the business of the legislature. The House Leader for the governing party is always a member of cabinet, assists in managing the affairs of the legislature and is responsible for announcing the daily order of house business.

**industrialization:** The process of economic and social changes brought about, starting in England in the late 18<sup>th</sup> Century, when extensive mechanization of production systems results in a shift from home-based hand manufacturing to large-scale factory production.

**judicial branch:** The branch of government that interprets and enforces laws. It is composed of the courts, the judges and chief justices and protects the rights of citizens from both the government and fellow citizens.

**legislative assembly:** The governing body that debates and makes laws. It is sometimes referred to as the legislature, or the house.

**legislative branch:** The governing body that debates and makes laws.

**Lieutenant Governor:** The person who is the provincial representative of the Queen and the ceremonial head of state.

**Mace:** The symbol of the authority of the House of Commons and the provincial legislature. The ceremonial staff used in parliament, which symbolizes the authority of the speaker to oversee the legislature. The mace is carried into the chamber each day at the beginning of a sitting.

**majority government:** When the total number of government seats in the House exceeds the total number of opposition seats.

**Mayor:** An official elected or appointed to act as chief executive of a city or town.

**Member of Parliament (MP):** An individual, elected by the people, in a particular riding to represent them in a federal parliament.

**Member of Provincial Parliament (MPP)** An individual, elected by the people, in a particular riding to represent them in the provincial parliament.

**members' statements:** A 15 minute period is set aside each day for any member who is not a cabinet minister to make a statement on a subject of national, regional or local importance. Each statement lasts for one minute.

**minority government:** When the total number of government seats in the House is less than the total number of opposition seats.

**multi-seat district:** An electoral district (or riding) that elects more than one representative.

**Orders and Notices Paper:** is published every day the provincial government is sitting and lists everything for the House to consider, including bills, government business, written questions, private members' business and committee information. It may also be called the Order Paper.

**Parliament:** The legislature, or legislative assembly. It is also the period from the end of a government's term and the calling of another election. Each parliament consists of one or more sessions.

**Parliament Hill:** A common name for the area in Ottawa where the federal Parliament Buildings are located.

**parliamentary secretary:** Parliamentary secretaries are appointed by the Prime Minister to help Cabinet Ministers. They table documents or answer questions for a Minister, participate in debates on bills and speak to committees on government policies and proposals.

**Premier:** After a provincial election, the leader of the party with the most elected members, heads the provincial government as Premier.

**Private Member:** Members of parliament who are not cabinet ministers.

**Private Members' business:** For one hour each day in the federal government, and on Tuesdays and Thursdays in the provincial government, private members can have their bills and motions debated by the House. These items are selected in a draw and some of them are chosen to come to a vote.

**Private Members' public bill:** A public bill which is introduced by a private member instead of by the government.

**popular vote:** The number of people who voted.

**portfolio:** The formal name for the sector or issue a politician may be responsible for. For example: “Ms. Brown is in charge of the child care portfolio.”

**proxy pay equity:** The exercise of evaluating equal wages for women in female-dominated jobs by comparing them to wages in other sectors where people are performing jobs of similar value.

**Question Period:** The period during a parliamentary day which lasts 60 minutes. The opposition and government members ask questions about government activity.

**responsible government:** An idea about government developed as early as the 13th century in Britain. It started with the concept that governments should be held accountable to the people and therefore representatives would have to report to the people in their area. Today, this term refers to the fact that any legislation a government wants to pass, or any other action it wants to take, has to have the approval of a majority in the assembly (everyone sitting in the House).

**riding:** An electoral district.

**riding associations:** Political parties organize an association in most ridings in Canada to coordinate their activities and support their candidates in that riding.

**Royal Assent:** The Governor General or Lieutenant Governor gives approval to a bill on behalf of the Queen by signing the bill.

**seat:** A common way of referring to the position a politician holds in office. Ontario's parliament has 103 seats.

**Senate:** The Senate consists of non-elected members who are appointed by the Prime Minister. It approves laws passed by the lower house (House of Commons) and may pass legislation that is not monetary in nature.

**sitting:** The time when governments are actually in the parliamentary chambers (legislatures) doing the work of government. When they are not, we say that governments are in *recess*.

**the speaker:** The member who is elected by all the members of the legislature to preside over all meetings of the house in a fair and impartial manner. The speaker upholds the rules of procedure and ensures that the business of the house is carried out in an orderly manner.

**standing committee:** A committee which exists for the duration of a parliamentary session. This committee examines and reports on the general conduct of activities by government, departments and agencies and reports on matters referred to it by the house, including proposed legislation.

**suffrage:** The right or privilege of voting and is also known as *the franchise*. A *suffragette* is an advocate of women's suffrage, and usually refers to those who fought for the vote in the early 1900s.

**systemic change:** Change which affects the very values and structures by which a society organizes itself.

**vote of non-confidence:** An opposition member may call for a vote of non-confidence in the government. If this vote passes, the government is said to have lost the confidence of the house and usually resigns.

**wage gap:** The difference in wages between women and men.

**whip:** A member of each party who ensures the presence of party members in the legislature or at committee meetings to maintain adequate representation should a vote be held.

## Sources

Cleveland, G. & M. Krashinsky. 1998. *The benefits and costs of good child care: The economic rationale for public investment in young children*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.

Friendly, M. & J. Beach & M. Turiano. 2002. *Early Childhood Education and Care in Canada 2001*. Toronto: Childcare Resource and Research Unit, Centre for Urban and Community Studies, University of Toronto.

Friendly, M. 2000. *History and Vision: Blending Child Care and Early Childhood Education*. Regina: Social Policy Research Unit, University of Regina.

Kirner, J. & M. Rayner. 1999. *The Women's Power Pocket Book*. Australia: Penguin Books.

Kingwell, M. & C. Moore. 1999. *Canada: Our Century*. Toronto: Doubleday Canada.

Landsberg, M. 2003. *Want a revolution in child care? Vote for women*. Toronto: Toronto Star.

Office of the Speaker of the House of Commons. 2001. *Guide to the Canadian House of Commons*. Ottawa: Author.

Ontario Women's Directorate. 1993. *Words that count women out/in*. Toronto: Author.

Rebick, J. 2000. *Imagine Democracy*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing.

Rule, W. & S. Hill. 1996. *"Ain't I A Voter?" Voting Rights for Women*. USA: Ms. Magazine.

Watkins, S. A. & M. Rueda & M. Rodriguez. 1999. *Introducing Feminism*. United Kingdom: Icon Books.

## Websites

Many of the following websites were used in researching this guide. They all have much to offer those wanting more information.

### **For information on government at all 3 levels:**

Canada's Parliament — [Parl.gc.ca](http://Parl.gc.ca)

\*including an A to Z INDEX for who is who and how things work:

[http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/AboutParl\\_index.asp?Language=E](http://www.parl.gc.ca/common/AboutParl_index.asp?Language=E)

Citizenship and Immigration Canada — [www.cic.gc.ca](http://www.cic.gc.ca)

City of Toronto — [www.city.toronto.on.ca](http://www.city.toronto.on.ca)

Justice Canada — [www.canada.justice.gc.ca/en/](http://www.canada.justice.gc.ca/en/)

National Children's Agenda — [www.socialunion.gc.ca/nca\\_e.html](http://www.socialunion.gc.ca/nca_e.html)

Ontario Legislative Assembly — [www.ontla.on.ca/index.htm](http://www.ontla.on.ca/index.htm)

Statistics Canada — [www.statcan.ca](http://www.statcan.ca)

### **For information on equality, democracy, political action, and social issues:**

Campaign 2000—[www.campaign2000.ca](http://www.campaign2000.ca)

Canadian Research Institute for the Advancement of Women—[www.criaw-icref.ca](http://www.criaw-icref.ca)

Celebrating Women's Achievements—[www.nlc-bnc.ca/women](http://www.nlc-bnc.ca/women)

Child Care Advocacy Association of Canada—[www.childcareadvocacy.ca](http://www.childcareadvocacy.ca)

Childcare Research and Resource Unit—[www.childcarecanada.org](http://www.childcarecanada.org)

DisAbled Women's Network Ontario (DAWN) - [www.dawn.thot.net](http://www.dawn.thot.net)

Equal Pay Coalition—[www.web.net/~equalpay](http://www.web.net/~equalpay)

Equal Voice—[www.equalvoice.ca](http://www.equalvoice.ca)

Fair Vote Canada — [www.fairvotecanada.org](http://www.fairvotecanada.org)

National Action Committee on the Status of Women - [www.nac-cca.ca](http://www.nac-cca.ca)

Ontario Coalition for Better Child Care (OCBCC) - [www.childcareontario.org](http://www.childcareontario.org)

Ontario Coalition for Social Justice (OCSJ) - [www.ocsj.ca](http://www.ocsj.ca)

Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants—[www.ocasi.org](http://www.ocasi.org)

Ontario Women's Directorate—[www.gov.on.ca/mczcr/owd](http://www.gov.on.ca/mczcr/owd)

Ontario Women's Justice Network—[www.owjn.org](http://www.owjn.org)

Toronto Coalition for Better Child Care — [www.torontochildcare.org](http://www.torontochildcare.org)

Toronto Disaster Relief Committee (TDRC) - [www.tdrc.net](http://www.tdrc.net)

### **For information on our generous WPP project sponsors:**

Status of Women Canada — [www.swc-cfc.gc.ca](http://www.swc-cfc.gc.ca)

Elementary Teachers' Federation of Ontario (ETFO) — [www.etfo.ca](http://www.etfo.ca)

Ontario Federation of Labour (OFL) - [www.ofl-fto.on.ca](http://www.ofl-fto.on.ca)

Canadian Auto Workers (CAW) — [www.caw.ca](http://www.caw.ca)

Canadian Union of Public Employees—[www.cupe.ca](http://www.cupe.ca)

Canadian Benefits Consulting Group (CBCG) — [www.canben.com](http://www.canben.com)



# Women Power & Politics

---

**“Let us give women  
every weapon whereby  
they can defend  
themselves;**

**Let us remove the stigma  
of political nonentity  
under which women  
have been placed.**

**Let us give women  
a fair deal!”**

**Nellie McClung**  
**Writer and Suffragette**  
1915